

From: atomicoadranch@netzero.net
To: [Martinez, Pierre@Energy](mailto:Martinez,Pierre@Energy); [Jennings, Jennifer@Energy](mailto:Jennings,Jennifer@Energy);
cc: [Laura Cunningham](#);
Subject: Alternative suggestion request for the Rio Mesa Project
Date: Friday, August 17, 2012 10:12:23 AM
Attachments: [PVMS Siting_20120809_sent.pdf](#)
[PVMSP_NOP_County_Clerk_Filing_8-8-12.pdf](#)

Dear Pierre,

We are not interveners on the Rio Mesa Project, but we have intervened in four other CEC solar project cases. We have tried to follow the Rio Mesa proceedings and have made two site visits to the area.

I would like to suggest/request that the energy commission add the attached project proposal as an alternative to the Rio Mesa site. The Rio Mesa site simple has too many conflicts with wildlife and cultural resources to be a responsible project.

Riverside County has released the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project (PVMS), which is on previously disturbed private land on the Palo Verde Mesa, west of Blythe, California.

As you can see from the letter below, the applicant is looking for a builder for their project.

The Rio Mesa site acreage has been reduced to about 3,700 acres and the proposed Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project would be on 3,200 acres of land that is nearly 100 percent disturbed. You can work with that.

I am fully aware that just yesterday, BrightSource was quite upset that the CEC is considering a photovoltaic alternative for their Hidden Hills proposal and will probably object to this idea. Alternative technologies should be considered even if that makes BrightSource mad. BrightSource received their

share of special treatment for the Ivanpah Project. We believe it is time to take the position that protects wildlife over energy development in the wrong location. Please consider the Palo Verde Solar Project as an alternative in the Preliminary Staff Assessment for the Rio Mesa Project. Please also keep the PV alternative alive for the Rio Mesa Project.

Thanks,

Kevin Emmerich
Laura Cunningham
Basin and Range watch
P.O. Box 70
Beatty, NV 89003

Riverside County has released the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for our Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project (PVMS), which is on previously disturbed private land on the Palo Verde Mesa, west of Blythe, California.

We do not yet have a solar company as technology partner for the project, but the 3,250-acre generation area is being permitted for solar PV.

PVMS lands are adjacent to the eastern edge of the Riverside East SEZ, and they overlap with the Development Focus Area in Alternative 1 (Disturbed Lands/Low Resource Conflict Alternative) proposed July 2012 in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP). The lands also overlap with the southern section of the "Blythe Mesa Alternative" from the environmental analysis of the Blythe Solar Power Project (then proposed by Solar Millennium for

thermal, now being changed to PV by NextEra).

Attached are the following documents:

- 1) RRG's brief presentation (9 slides) on the PVMS lands, which includes maps relevant to the information above; and
- 2) Riverside County's NOP.

The NOP includes information on the County's 30-day comment period, as well as the scoping meeting it has set for Aug. 23, 2012, in Blythe.

Please let me know if you have any questions of us, or if we can provide any additional information.

Thank you.

Tom

Thomas E. Eisenhauer - Renewable Resources Group (RRG)

323.936.9303 - teisenhauer@renewablegroup.com

--



Carolyn Syms Luna
Director

RIVERSIDE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

AUG 08 2012

LARRY W. WARD, CLERK
By *R. Anderson* R. Anderson
Deputy

Agency Notice of Preparation of an Draft Environmental Impact Report

DATE: August 8, 2012

TO: Riverside County, County Clerk
2720 Gateway Drive
Riverside, CA 92507

COUNTY CLERK
Neg Declaration/No Determination
Filed per P.R.C. 21152
POSTED

AUG 08 2012

Removed: _____
By: _____ Dept.
County of Riverside, State of California

PROJECT CASE NO./TITLE: Environmental Impact Report No. 532/ Conditional Use Permit No. 3684/
Public Use Permit No. 916/ Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project

PROJECT LOCATION: East Riverside County – Palo Verde Area Plan. The Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project is located approximately five miles northwest of Blythe city center and bounded on the north by McCoy Wash, on the east by agricultural lands, on the west by U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-managed public lands, and on the south by the Blythe Airport and other private lands that include agricultural and utility uses. The site consists primarily of agricultural land, including citrus orchards and winter wheat. The Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs) for the project are listed on the attached sheet titled "Assessor's Parcels for Project Site CUP 3684 Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project." Also enclosed are the following exhibits: Notice of Preparation Attachment A; Figure 1a: Regional Area Map; Figure 1b: Study Area Map; Figure 2: Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project – Topographic Quadrangle Map; Figure 3: Site Plan & Solar Module; Figure 4: Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project Conditional Use Permit #3684 Pages 1 through 3; Figure 5: Typical Tiled Tracker Panels; and Figure 6: Operations and Maintenance Building.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The proposed project consists of the construction and operation of a 486 megawatt solar photovoltaic (PV) power plant and transmission line on approximately 3,400 acres. The proposed project would consist of a solar array field utilizing single-axis solar PV trackers and panels with a combined maximum height of eight and a half feet. Supporting facilities on-site would include two electrical substations, one operation and maintenance building, inverters, transformers, and associated switchgear. Since most of the site has nearly level to gently sloping topography, no mass grading would be required, and the natural drainage patterns of the site would not be significantly altered. The Project site would be secured 24 hours per day by on-site private security personnel or remote services with motion-detection cameras. An equestrian-wire, wildlife-friendly and drainage-compatible security fence that meets the National Electrical Safety Code would be placed around the perimeter of the site. The proposed lighting for the site would be consistent with County building code. A 14.7-mile-long 230 kilovolt transmission line would connect the proposed project's northwestern substation with the approved Colorado River Substation, located west of the project site. The solar array field would be located entirely within the County of Riverside's jurisdiction. The transmission line would be located on County of

Riverside Office • 4080 Lemon Street, 12th Floor
P.O. Box 1409, Riverside, California 92502-1409
(951) 955-3200 • Fax (951) 955-1811

Desert Office • 38686 El Cerrito Road
Palm Desert, California 92211
(760) 863-8277 • Fax (760) 863-7555

Riverside jurisdiction, with the exception of approximately 1.7 miles (20.6 acres) within the City of Blythe and approximately 4.0 miles (48 acres) within land managed by the BLM. A Development Agreement between the County of Riverside and the applicant would be established, setting forth the rights and responsibilities of each party with respect to project development and operation.

LEAD AGENCY:

Riverside County Planning Department
4080 Lemon Street, 12th Floor
P.O. Box 1409
Riverside, CA 92502-1409
Attn: Jay Olivas, Project Planner

PROJECT SPONSOR:

Applicant: Renewable Resources Group
Address: 5700 Wilshire Blvd, Ste. 330
Los Angeles, CA 90036

Pursuant to Riverside County Rules to Implement the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), notice is given to responsible and interested agencies that the Riverside County Planning Department plans to oversee the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the above-described project. The purpose of this notice is to solicit guidance from your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. In accordance with the time limits mandated by State law, information in that regard should be submitted to this office as soon as possible, but **not later than thirty (30) days** after receiving this notice.

In addition to offering the opportunity to submit written comments, the County of Riverside will hold a scoping meeting to discuss the proposed project and the environmental process, and to provide agency representation, individuals, and other interested parties the opportunity to make oral comments regarding the scope of the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held at the time and place indicated below.

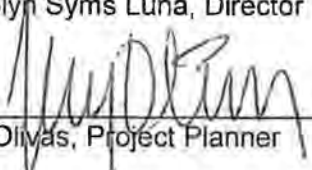
Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project Scoping Meeting

Date: August 23, 2012
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: Blythe City Hall (Multi-Purpose Room)
235 N. Broadway
Blythe, CA 92225

Attachment A contains a brief project description and lists environmental topics that will be addressed in the Draft EIR. If you have any questions, please contact Jay Olivas, Project Planner at (951) 955-1195 or by email at jolivas@rctlma.org.

Sincerely,

RIVERSIDE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
Carolyn Syms Luna, Director


Jay Olivas, Project Planner

Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project

Assessor's Parcels for Solar Field (CUP 3684)

Riverside County		
821-090-018	821-050-015	821-060-003
821-020-007	821-050-016	821-060-006
821-020-019	821-050-017	821-080-043
821-020-020	821-050-018	821-080-044
821-020-021	821-050-019	821-080-045
821-020-022	821-050-020	821-080-046
821-020-023	821-050-021	821-080-047
821-020-024	821-050-022	821-080-050
821-020-025	821-050-023	821-090-011
821-020-026	821-050-024	821-090-012
821-020-027	821-050-025	821-090-013
821-020-028	821-050-026	821-090-014
821-020-029	821-050-027	821-090-015
821-050-004	821-050-028	821-090-016
821-050-012	821-050-029	821-090-017
821-050-013	821-060-001	821-100-034
821-050-014	821-060-002	

Assessor's Parcels for the 230 kV Transmission Line

Riverside County		
821120030	863030008	863040020
821120042	863030009	863040021
821120043	863030010	863050004
821120044	863030013	863050008
821120048	863030014	879080013
824090024	863030015	879080014
824102015	863030016	879080032
863030006	863030017	879090048
863030007	863040015	879090049
Bureau of Land Management		
879080022	879080027	879090034
879080024	879090033	879090035
City of Blythe		
824102020	824102023	824102024
824102026	824102027	824110035
824110036	824110037	824110038

**NOTICE OF PREPARATION
ATTACHMENT A**

PALO VERDE MESA SOLAR PROJECT

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

Project Location

The proposed Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project (Project or PVMSP) is located in the Palo Verde Valley area of eastern Riverside County, approximately five miles northwest of the of Blythe city center (Figure 1) and bounded on the north by McCoy Wash, on the east by agricultural lands, on the west by U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-managed public lands, and on the south by the Blythe Airport and other private lands that include agricultural and utility uses. The site consists primarily of agricultural land, including citrus orchards and wheat fields. Figure 2 depicts the solar array field on the McCoy Wash 7.5' U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Topographic Quadrangle. Interstate 10 is just south of the Project area.

Project Description

The Project consists of construction and operation of a 486 megawatt (MW) photovoltaic (PV) solar power plant and an approximately 14.7-mile 230 kilovolt (kV) transmission line would occupy 3,400 acres. The power produced by the Project would be conveyed to the local power grid via interconnection to the Southern California Edison Colorado River Substation (CRS), an approved new substation located south of Interstate 10. The Project would consist of the following components (see Figure 3):

- Solar Facility (3,250 acres total)
 - Solar array field would utilize single-axis solar PV trackers. The six trackers with 18 north-south oriented rows of PV panels would be configured into blocks. The blocks are 295 feet long and 140 feet wide (see inset in Figure 3, Typical 1.5 MW Solar Module).
 - System of underground interior collection power lines located between inverters and substations
 - Two on-site substations (each approximately 300 feet long by 300 feet wide)
 - One operation and maintenance (O&M) building (approximately 3,500 square feet)
 - Several interior access roads
- Approximately 14.7 miles of new 230 kV transmission line
 - Approximately 2.3 miles would be located within the solar array field
 - Approximately 12.4 miles would extend outside of the solar array field and would be placed within a 100-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW) and occupy 150 acres

All of the solar panels, substations, and inverters and the O&M facility would be located on lands in private ownership. The transmission line easement, from the northwestern Project substation to the CRS, would be located on 9.0 miles of County of Riverside jurisdiction 1.7 miles of City of Blythe jurisdiction (21 acres), and 4.0 miles of BLM-managed lands (approximately 48 acres). Over 90% of the private land comprises agricultural land and developed or disturbed land.

The Blythe Mesa Solar Project, which is adjacent on its southern edge to the Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project, is proposing to utilize double-circuit 230 kV transmission line poles within a 125-foot ROW. If that project is approved prior to the proposed Project, the Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project would utilize 9.1

miles of the vacant circuit position and only construct 5.6 miles of new transmission line from the Project substation to the Blythe Mesa Solar Project's Interstate 10 Substation (see Figure 1b Project Area Map).

Applicant's Project Objectives

The Applicant's objectives for the Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project are as follows:

- Construct a solar energy facility in order to help meet State and federal renewable energy standards and goals.
- Assist with greenhouse gas reduction objectives to the maximum extent possible.
- Locate the Project facilities as near as possible to electrical transmission facilities with anticipated capacity and a reserved California Independent System Operator (CAISO) interconnection position.
- Site the Project in an area with excellent solar energy resources in order to maximize energy productivity from the PV panels.
- To the extent feasible, site the Project on previously disturbed land with compatible topography and in a manner that minimizes environmental impacts.
- Use a proven and available solar PV technology.

Land Use Considerations

The proposed Project would be situated in the County of Riverside (as shown on Figure 1). The Riverside County General Plan (Palo Verde Area Plan) applies an Agriculture land use designation to the proposed Project site. Parcels are currently zoned W-2-10 (Controlled Development Areas) (10 Acre Min.), W-2-5 (Controlled Development Areas), and A-1-10 (Light Agriculture). Figures 4 a, b, and c illustrate the Conditional Use Permit No. 3684 exhibit pages 1 through 3. A Development Agreement between the County of Riverside and the applicant would be established, setting forth the rights and responsibilities of each party with respect to Project development and operation.

The 230 kV transmission line would traverse mainly County of Riverside jurisdiction, 1.7 miles (21 acres) of City of Blythe jurisdiction, and approximately 4.0 miles (48 acres) of BLM-managed lands. Within the City of Blythe, the proposed transmission line would traverse private parcels zoned Service Industrial and Agriculture. The construction and operation of a transmission line would be a consistent use, subject to issuance of a CUP. On BLM-managed lands, the solar array field and transmission line would be located within designated utility corridors. A right of way grant from BLM would be required for construction and operation of a 230 kV transmission line.

Project Components

The Project would consist of two major components—a PV solar power plant and 14.7-mile-long 230 kV transmission line that would occupy 3,400 acres. The solar power plant would occupy 3,250 acres, which includes a solar array field, a system of interior collection power lines, inverters, substations, an O&M building, and several interior access roads. Approximately 12.4 miles of the transmission line would extend outside of the solar array field, be placed within a 100-foot ROW, and occupy 150 acres.

Solar Array

The Project would utilize single-axis PV trackers with silicon solar panels (Figure 5). All panels would be oriented in the same direction as they track the sun's movement. By design, the PV panels absorb sunlight to maximize electrical output and use anti-reflective glass, resulting in about half the reflectance of

standard residential and commercial glass. Due to the limited rotation angles, the solar panels have no potential for reflecting the sun's rays upon any ground-plane position.

The panels would be configured into trackers, and the trackers configured into blocks. Each block would comprise six trackers with 18 north-south oriented rows of PV panels (295 feet long and 140 feet wide) that rotate up to 45 degrees from east to west to follow the daily motion of the sun, with the center of rotation being approximately four to eight feet above grade. The panels would be supported by micro-piles that would be driven directly into the ground to a depth of 8 to 12 feet using a vibration technology to reduce noise impacts. Concrete foundations for the drive motors (devices used to move the drive strut back and forth) would be poured in place, and electrical equipment for the array would be set in place. A tracked backhoe would drive piles. No blasting or rock-breaking is anticipated or proposed. Small truck-mounted cranes or grade-all forklifts would place trackers on support piles.

Combiners and Inverters

Individual PV panels would be connected together in series to create a "string" to carry direct current (DC) electricity. Multiple DC strings would be brought together into an above-ground combiner box to merge the strings into a single high-current cable. From the combiner boxes, the cabling would run in raceways and underground to inverters (5.0 feet wide and 10.5 feet tall) mounted on small concrete pads (minimum 0.5 foot above grade) distributed across the site. The inverters would take the DC output from the combiner boxes and convert it to alternating current (AC) electricity.

Access Roads

Within the solar field, dirt access roads 12 feet wide would be constructed approximately every 200 to 400 feet to allow access to and maintenance of the solar panels.

Medium Voltage (34.5 kV) Collector Lines

The AC electricity created by the inverters would be increased to 34.5 kV medium voltage using a standard "step-up" transformer. The medium voltage collection lines would begin at the inverter/transformer pads and would be placed in three-foot-deep trenches and daisy chain between the inverter-transformers until the output from 10 to 15 blocks (transformers) is gathered and transferred underground to the local on-site substation. The medium voltage collection circuits would carry 20 to 30 MW of electricity to an above ground breaker within the Project substation site. The substation would combine all 34.5 kV cables from the inverter transformers and would transform that power into a 230 kV output.

Project Substations

The two Project substations (each 300 feet long by 300 feet wide) would collect all the medium-voltage circuits (34.5 kV) and would step up the voltage to 230 kV.

230 kV Transmission Line

A 14.7 mile-long 230 kV transmission line would link the Project's northwestern substation to the CRS (interconnection point). Within the solar field site, a 2.3-mile-long transmission line would connect the Project substations. The transmission line would then extend another 12.4 miles from the southernmost Project substation to the CRS and would be placed within a 100-foot ROW (150 acres).

The transmission line facilities would include single-circuit tubular steel poles that are 77 to 120 feet tall with an average distance between poles (span length) of 700 to 800 feet. The poles would be directly embedded in the soil or set in concrete foundations approximately 20 to 30 feet deep. Access roads to

each structure would be 16 to 20 feet wide by eight inches deep of gravel over compacted subgrade and located within the proposed 100-foot ROW.

If the Blythe Mesa Solar Project's double-circuit 230 kV transmission line poles are approved and prior to the proposed PVMSP, the PVMSP would utilize 9.1 miles of the vacant circuit position and only construct 5.6 miles of new transmission line from the Project substation to the Blythe Mesa Solar Project's Interstate 10 Substation (see Figure 1b Study Area Map).

Operation and Maintenance Building

One O&M building—approximately 3,500 square feet, enclosed, and no more than 30 feet tall—would provide work and storage space. A covered outdoor temporary assembly and storage area (80,000 square feet, 25 feet tall) would be directly adjacent to the O&M building. Figures 6a and 6b illustrate the O&M building plan, layout, and elevation.

Fencing

The site would be enclosed with equestrian-type fencing that would typically be set 30 feet from the array. The fence would be approximately seven feet high and consist of posts set into the ground on approximately 8- to 12-foot spacing, with approximately six strands of smooth wire at about one-foot vertical spacing.

General Construction Process

Site Preparation

The PV system proposed for the site can operate on slopes up to nine percent. Since most of the site has nearly level to gently sloping topography, no mass grading would be required. Some of the proposed parcels for facilities and arrays would require light grubbing for leveling and trenching. Access roads would require minimal grading. In order to aim for balanced cut-and-fill quantities, grading activities may include placement and compaction of excess materials in low-elevation areas of the site.

Installation of the electrical collection system would require excavations to a depth of about three feet for underground electrical circuits, inverter and switchgear enclosure foundations, and transformer foundations. The O&M building foundation would be excavated to a depth of about three feet.

Construction Activities

Construction of the Project is anticipated to occur over a three-year period with approximately 300 to 500 daily workers present on site during construction. Worker construction traffic would consist of approximately 250 to 400 daily vehicle roundtrips. It is anticipated that most workers would be drawn from the Blythe/Palo Verde Valley and Desert Center regions, with a smaller portion drawn from the Imperial Valley or Eastern Riverside County regions. Anticipated average daily material deliveries would consist of about 18 truck deliveries per day for 24 months. Workers and delivery trucks would access the site using the Neighbors Boulevard exit off Interstate 10, with primary access from Buck Road. On-site work hours would be from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. During the installation period, construction workers are projected to be on site five days per week, year-round. Due to weather or other major types of delays, times may shift to start as early as 5:00 a.m. and end as late as 8:00 p.m., and work may continue on weekends. In extreme circumstances, work may be performed as many as 24 hours per day, although this is not anticipated. Security would likely be on site 24 hours per day.

The Project would be constructed in the following stages, which would occur simultaneously on different portions of the site:

- Development of staging areas and assembly areas and grading of site access roads.
- Construction of arrays including pile installation, assembly of trackers, mounting of PV panels, and pile-driving of support piles, placement of trackers on support piles, and trenching and installation of electrical equipment for arrays.
- Construction of electrical transmission facilities, including the construction of two substations, the single-circuit transmission line, and one O&M building.

Construction staging and material lay-down would be distributed across the Project site to allow for efficient distribution of components to different parts of the Project. Typically, one staging and material lay-down area would be set up for every 100 acres of the Project site. These lay-down areas would be fenced and would cover approximately five acres each. Lay-down areas would be temporary and would be converted to solar arrays as work is completed in the general area. Within the solar field, grubbing and light grading of 12-foot-wide access roads would also be performed approximately every 200 to 400 feet to allow access to and maintenance of the solar panels.

The solar field would be developed in six-month phases with six blocks constructed at a time (each block would be 100 acres, for a total of 600 acres at a time). As the arrays are being assembled, construction of the substations, transmission line, switchyard, and O&M building would also occur simultaneously. After the common facilities are completed in the earlier stages, the workforce would be devoted more to array construction in the later stages.

Separate activities would be associated with transmission line construction, including: (1) construction of staging areas for trailers, office personnel, equipment, material staging, lay-down, and employee parking on private land; (2) construction of access roads to the structure locations; (3) pole erection and installation of conductors and conductor hardware; (4) conductor installation; (5) construction of pulling sites to install conductors; and (6) installation of the overhead ground/fiber optic communications system.

Operation and Maintenance Activities

After the construction phase, the O&M building would serve as the Project's operations center for approximately ten permanent full-time employees, which would include one plant manager, three engineers/technicians, and six security staff. The Project facilities would be monitored during operating (daylight) hours, even though the Project facilities would be capable of automatic start-up, shutdown, self-diagnosis, and fault detection.

The panels may be cleaned up to two times per year, if necessary to optimize output and require a total of 302 acre-feet of water. No chemicals would be used during cleaning. The Project would work with Gila Farm Land, LLC (the landowner) and the Palo Verde Irrigation District for water services and supply during operation.

No heavy equipment would be used during normal operation. O&M vehicles would include trucks (pickup and flatbed), forklifts, and loaders for routine and scheduled maintenance and water trucks for solar panel washing. Large heavy-haul transport equipment may be brought to the Project site infrequently for equipment repair or replacement.

Long-term maintenance schedules would be developed to include periodic maintenance and equipment replacement in accordance with manufacturer recommendations. Solar panels are warranted for 25 years or longer and are expected to have a life of 30 or more years, with a degradation rate of 0.5% per year. Moving parts, such as motors and tracking module drive equipment, motorized circuit breakers and disconnects, and inverter ventilation equipment, would be serviced on a regular basis, and unscheduled maintenance would be performed as necessary.

The Project site would be secured 24 hours per day by on-site private security personnel or remote security services with motion-detection cameras.

Decommissioning

At the end of the energy contract term, the facilities would be decommissioned and dismantled and the site restored. Decommissioning activities would require a workforce similar to that of construction. Activities for decommissioning of a solar plant would include:

- Dismantling and removal of all-above ground equipment (solar panels, tracker units, transformers, substation, O&M building, etc.)
- Excavation and removal of all below-ground cabling
- Removal of posts
- Removal of primary roads (aggregate-based)
- Break-up and removal of concrete pads and foundations
- Scarification of compacted areas

Decommissioning would first involve removing the panels for sale into a secondary solar PV panel market. It is expected that a robust market for used PV panels will exist in the future because the panels can be used in various configurations and at various scales. Electricity demand continues to rise, and electricity prices are projected to continue their steady increase. Demand for solar energy is rapidly accelerating and is expected to grow for decades to come.

The module's component materials lack toxic metals such as mercury, lead, cadmium telluride, or gallium, and the majority of the components of the solar installation are made of materials that can be readily recycled. If the panels can no longer be used in a solar array, the silicon can be recovered, the aluminum resold, and the glass recycled. Other components of the solar installation, such as the tracker structures and mechanical assemblies, can be recycled, as they are made from galvanized steel. Equipment such as drive controllers, inverters, transformers, and switchgear can be either reused or their components recycled. The equipment pads are made from concrete, which can be crushed and recycled. Underground conduit and wire can be removed by uncovering trenches and backfilling when done. The electrical wiring is made from copper and/or aluminum and can be reused or recycled, as well.

Decommissioning of the 230 kV transmission line would be completed using traditional heavy construction equipment, such as front-end loaders, cranes, track-mounted and rubber-tired excavators, and motor graders. Dismantling would proceed in the following general stages: (1) dismantling and demolishing above-ground structures; (2) removing concrete foundations; (3) excavating and removing soils and broken concrete from the site; and (4) surface contouring to return the disturbed area to its pre-Project state to the greatest extent feasible.

2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL TOPICS TO BE ADDRESSED

Introduction

The County of Riverside has determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) shall be prepared to address the potential significant impacts of the proposed Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project. The EIR will involve research, analysis, and study of the following environmental topics:

- Aesthetics/Visual Resources/Reflection
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources and Paleontological Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Socioeconomics
- Traffic and Transportation

The EIR will include all topical areas of content required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), including cumulative impacts, alternatives to the proposed Project, and growth-inducing impacts. For each resource topic, environmental impacts relating to construction, operations, and decommissioning phases of the Project will be identified; however, the level of analysis to be included may vary based on the complexity of the issues, public and agency input to this Notice of Preparation (NOP), and/or refinements to the Project description that may occur subsequent to the publication of this NOP. For impacts that are significant, mitigation measures will be proposed to alleviate or avoid the significant impact(s).

Aesthetics/Visual Resources/Reflection

Placement of PV solar panels, the transmission line, and other Project facilities may alter the views of the Project area. Potential visual impacts of this Project on sensitive receptors and scenic resources will be further evaluated in the EIR. Photo simulations of the proposed Project from key observation points will be provided to assist in the evaluation. The EIR will also analyze the possible impacts of reflection of the sun off the solar modules and nighttime lighting of portions of the solar facility.

Agriculture Resources

The potential impact on prime and unique farmlands and lands zoned as such will be evaluated in the EIR, as will the potential impact of converting agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses.

Air Quality

The proposed Project site is located in the Mojave Desert Air Basin, and air emissions are regulated by the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District. The EIR will address consistency with regional and local air quality plans and evaluate and quantify the short-term and long-term sources of air pollutants generated by the Project, including mobile, stationary, and area source emissions.

Biological Resources

A biological resources assessment will be provided to evaluate the Project's effects on the area's vegetation communities, wildlife habitats, wildlife movement, wetlands and waters, habitat conservation plans/protection ordinances, and sensitive and/or listed species.

Cultural Resources and Paleontological Resources

Cultural resource effects will be analyzed in the EIR, including a query of the Northwest Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System, analysis of sacred lands identified through consultation with the Native American Heritage Commission, and consultation with Native Americans and other interested parties (e.g., local historical societies). The evaluation will also address the potential impacts to historic resources and the occurrence of paleontological (fossil) resources.

Geology and Soils

The EIR will assess soil and geologic conditions of the Project area and address hazards related to seismic activity, including the potential for liquefaction, ground shaking, soil failure, soil stability, and erosion potential.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The EIR will address the potential construction- and operation-related impacts relative to greenhouse gas emissions.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

The EIR will evaluate the presence of hazards or hazardous conditions that could affect construction and operation of the Project, including the location of nearby or on-site hazardous waste sites included on State or federal databases, airport and airstrip hazard zones, emergency response routes, and wildfire hazards.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The EIR will include an analysis of existing drainage systems and will evaluate potential impacts to water resources.

Land Use and Planning

The proposed Project may affect the use of the Project property. The EIR will evaluate potential environmental effects to land use that include compatibility with existing and proposed local zoning and consistency with land use plans, policies, or regulations of the applicable jurisdictions, which include the City of Blythe General Plan 2025, the Riverside County General Plan, and the BLM's California Desert Conservation Area Plan and Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan.

Noise

The EIR will determine noise levels due to construction and operation of the proposed Project and will evaluate impacts for consistency with applicable laws, regulations, ordinances, and guidelines.

Public Services and Utilities

With the accommodation of the construction workforce, there may be a temporarily increased demand for public services and utilities, including community facilities and schools, and an increased need for police and fire protection services. The EIR will evaluate the potential for impacts on these public services.

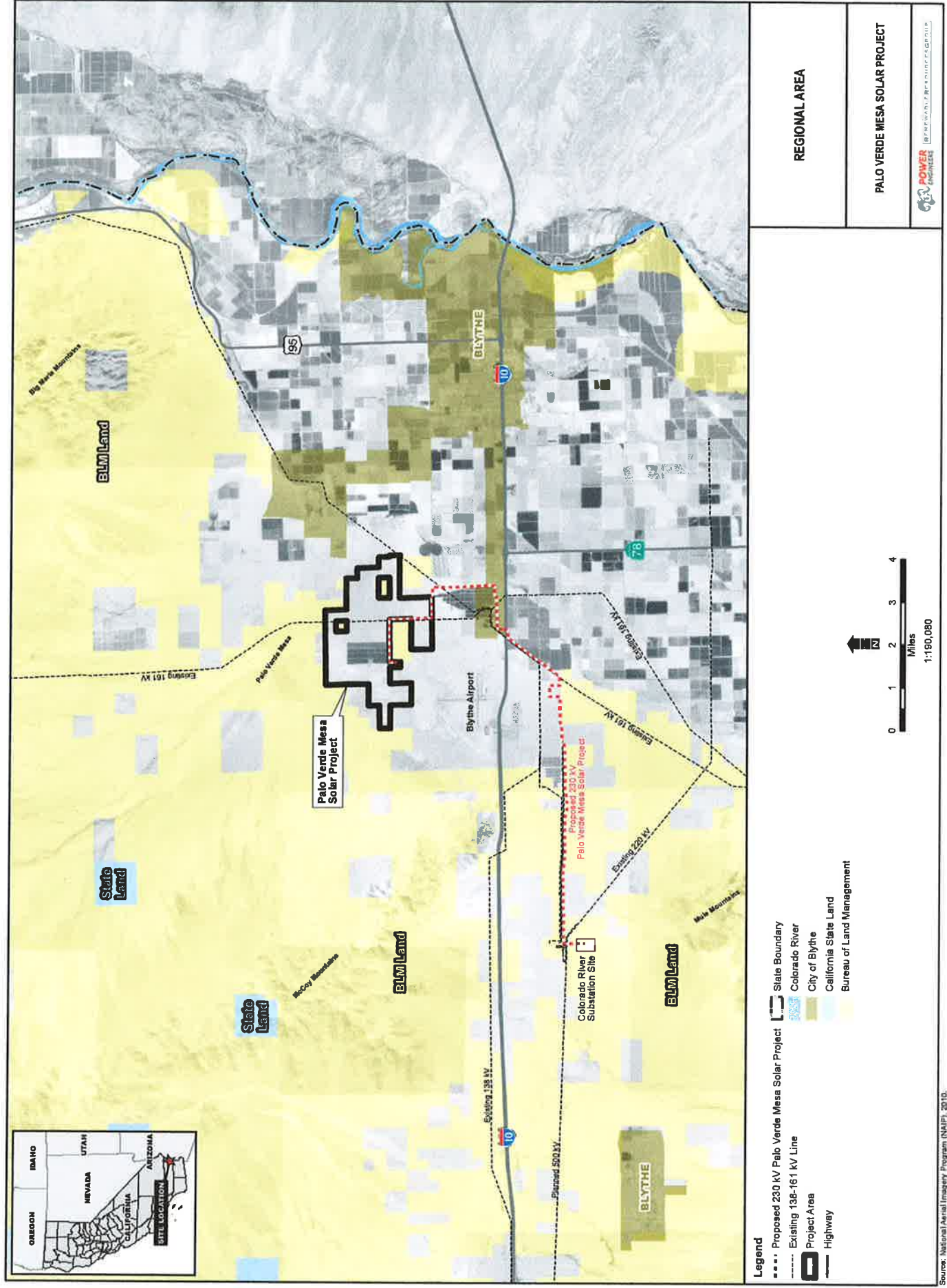
Socioeconomics and Population and Housing

The EIR will address the short- and long-term population and housing impacts that would result from the construction workforce. These effects could include physical and service-related changes within area communities associated with demand for temporary housing.

Traffic and Circulation

The EIR will include a traffic study that evaluates changes in circulation that could result from the proposed Project, focusing on effects during Project construction.

Figure 1a: Regional Area



Source: National Personnel Imagery Program (NPIP), 2010.

Figure 1b: Project Area

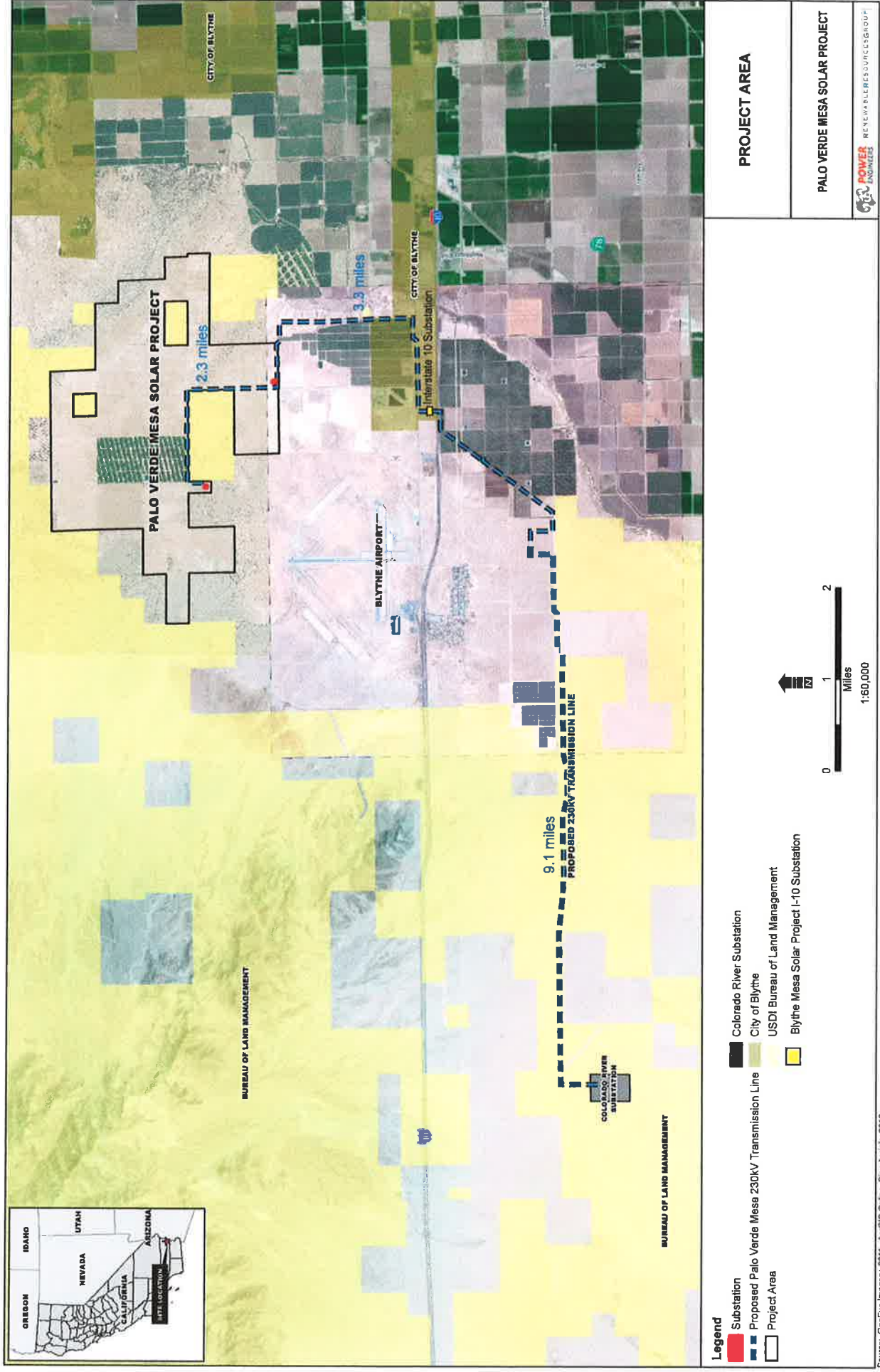


Figure 2: Topographic Quadrangle Map

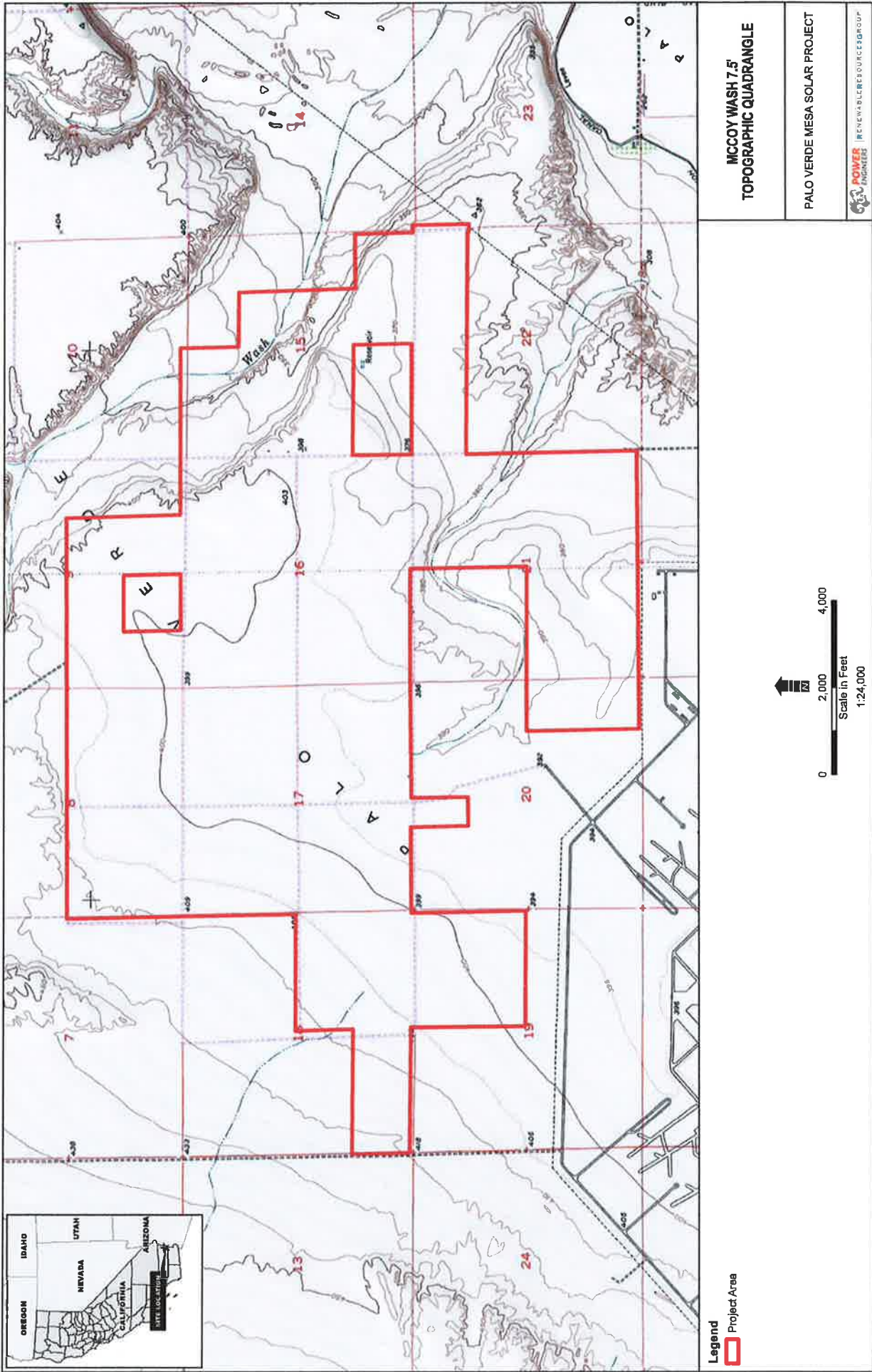


Figure 3: Site Plan & Solar Module

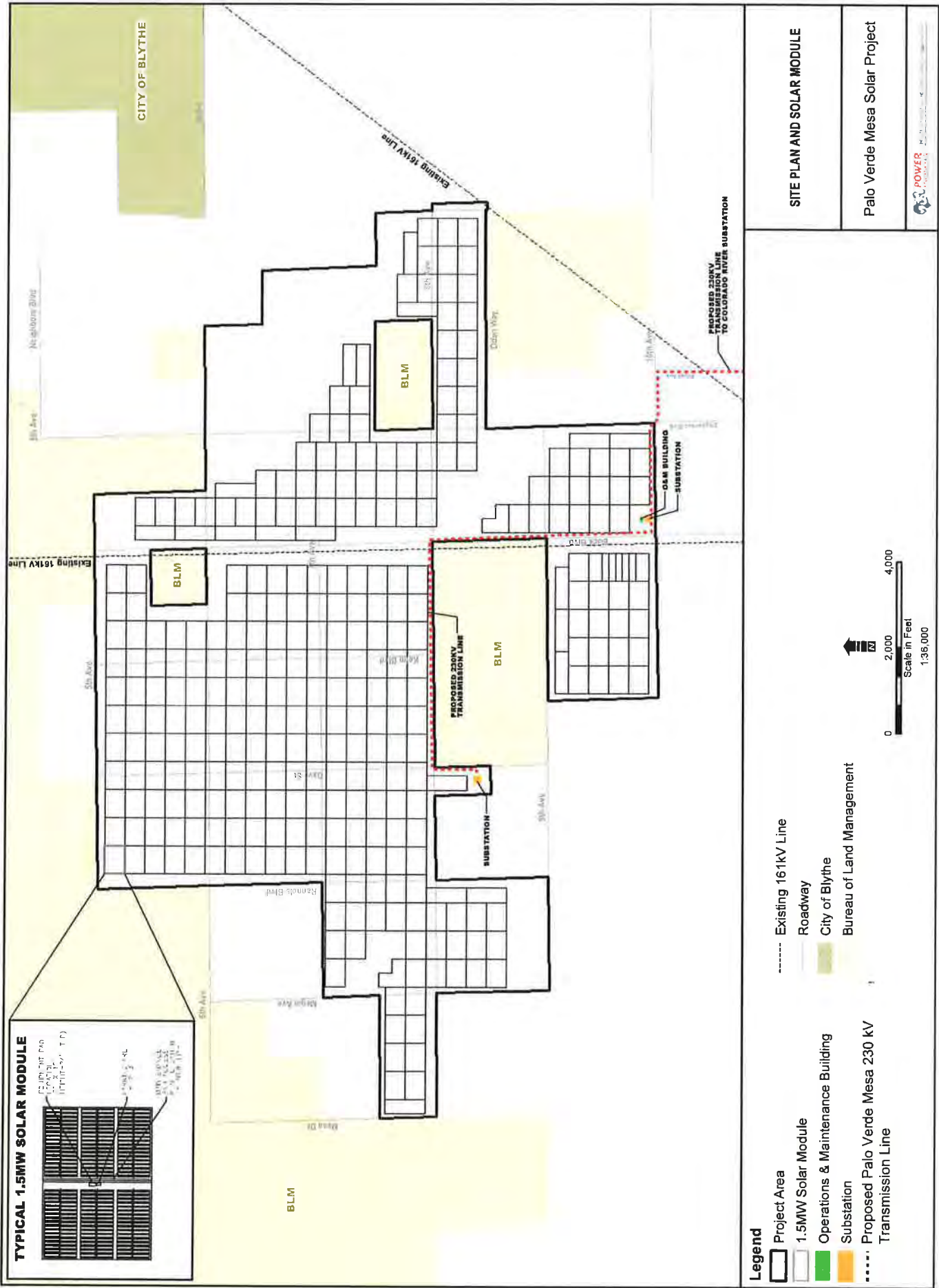


Figure 4a: Conditional Use Permit #3684

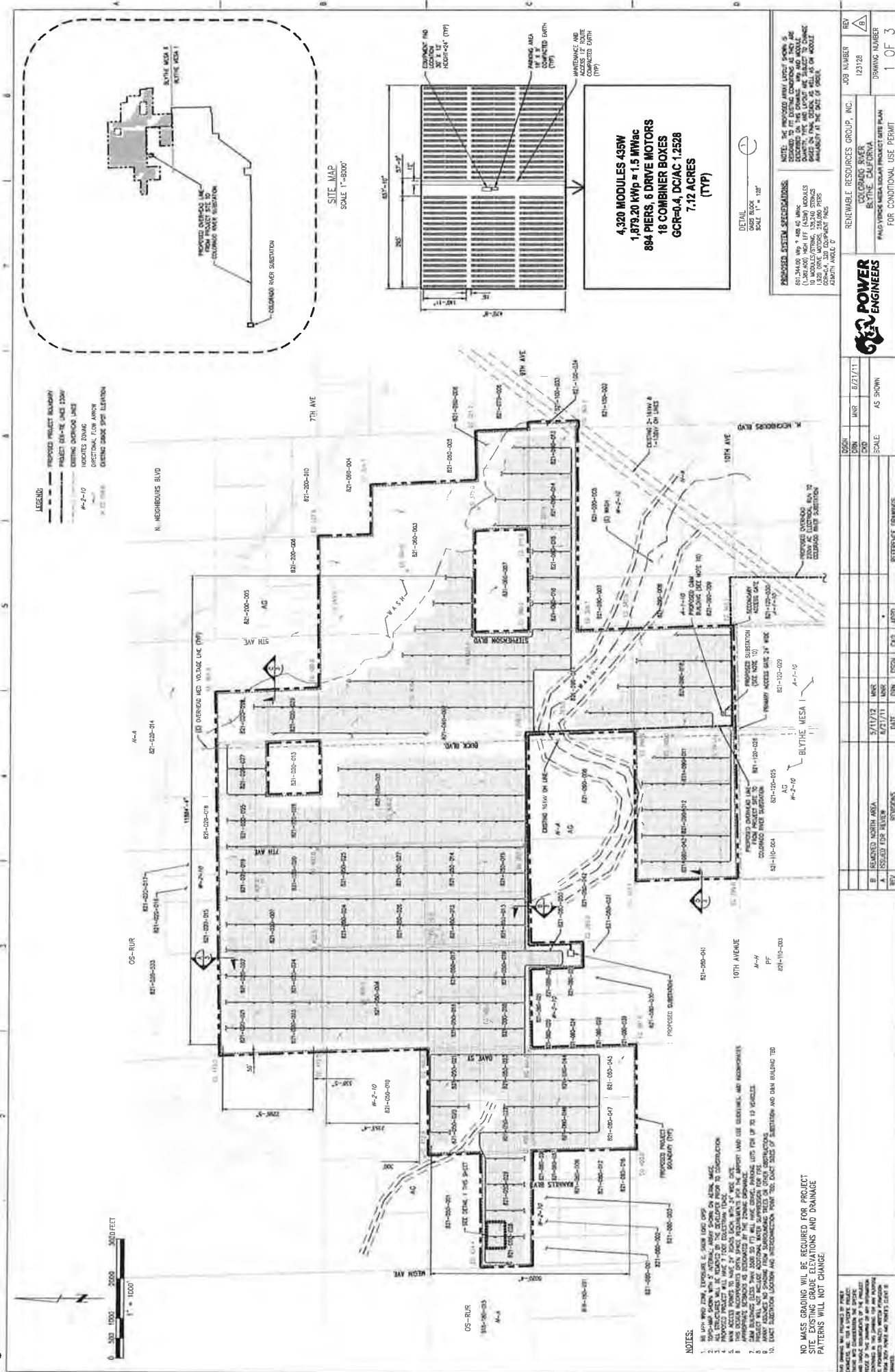


Figure 4b: Conditional Use Permit #3684

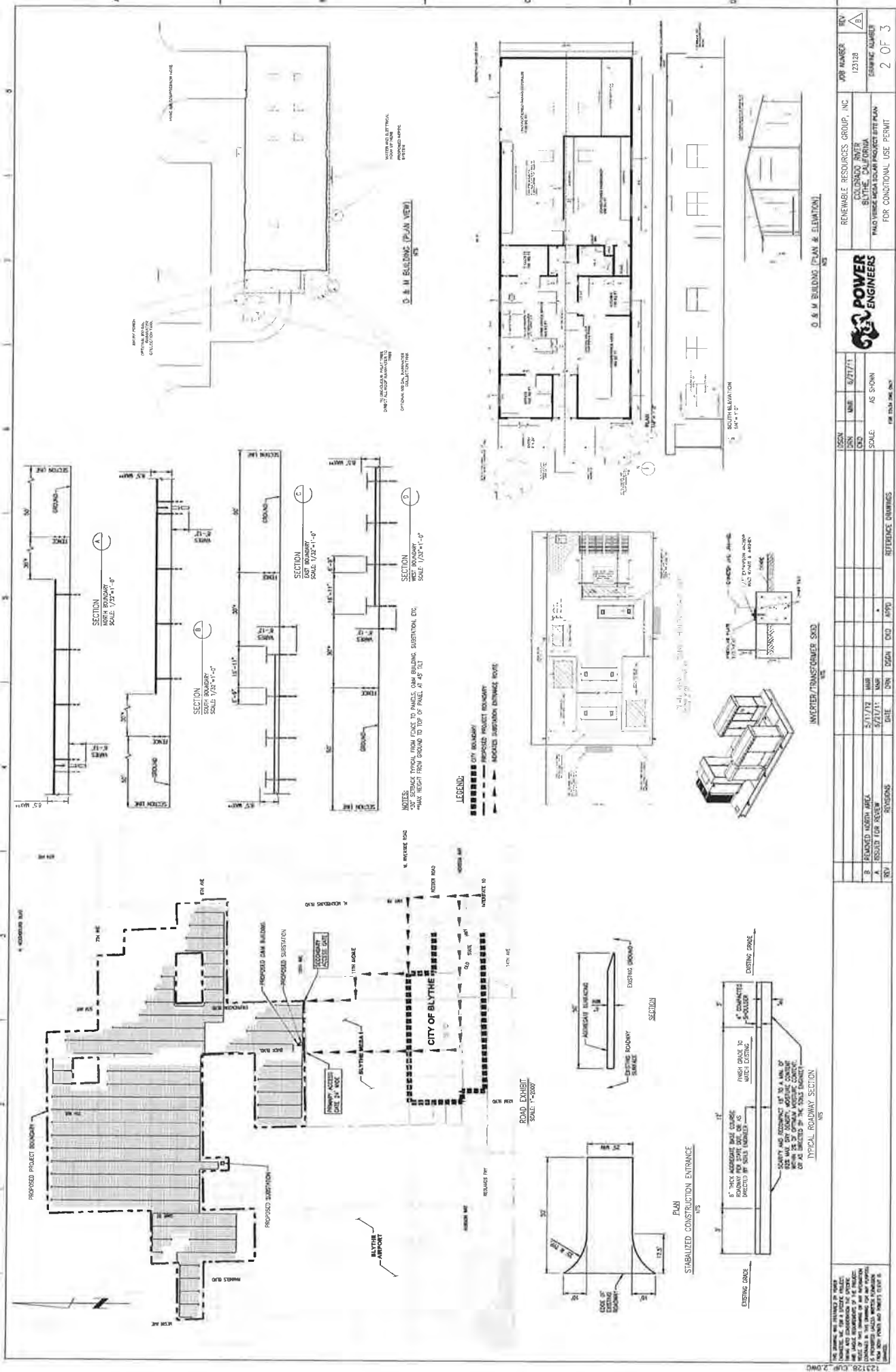


Figure 5: Typical Tiled Tracker Panels



Figure 6b: Operations and Maintenance Building Interior

